Worlds Remade While You Wait—On the East Side

By Deems Veiller
Sketches by Alex Rosenfeld

ZYNDA, Dora and Esther keep a restaurant. Zyn, Dor, Est spell Zyndorest—that's what they call it. It is the only place in New York where you can eat real *knishes*, a delicacy made of liver, onions and raw potatoes.

When you move from the shadow of the Third Avenue "L" across the avenue to 115 East Tenth Street you can smell the redolent compounds of this Yiddish tidbit penetrating through the closed doors of the Zyndorest to the dump streets outside.

If it allures you and you follow it up six brownstone steps and into the first door front you will smell other smells—the rich smell of garlic, and the suffocating smell of blue tobacco smoke, and the smell of sweat and cheap perfume.

You will hear the babel of many tongues,

"I am going to get some more cough medicine. It didn't help me any, but it's excellent metal polish."

the sound of spitting, purring Russian, Yiddish in all its fifty-seven varieties, and the soft gliding syllables of pidgeon English, and over all the deep boom of the Sirfessor telling the world of his philosophy. He has come from Chicago via England and says he is a friend of Bernard Shaw.

And then you will relax onto a long, low, running divan, and lean your elbows on a rickety table. You will not notice the fresco of violent green and yellow mattress ticking that is behind you, but your eyes will travel to the opposite side of the room from the peacock blue curtain on the window across the fly-specked door to the wall where the pictures are. It is

Max Schlawbinsky and his latest neo-impressionistic painting entitled "The Russian Situation."

a perpetual exhibition. Sometimes—not often—it changes; the pictures are for sale.

There is the portrait of a negress, an angry negress with an elongated neck and a necklace of conch-shells, holding a basket of tired-looking fruit; there is the picture of three strange trees with scarlet trunks and the picture of the writhing snake with a butterfly dancing on its tail; and other pictures, painted by Rotstein and Brodowsky. At the further end of the room is the enamelled door spattered with bright colors in neo-impressionistic design, by Leon Arnsky, and the door that leads to the kitchen, hung in coal-black hangings cut in an openwork design, where chinks of light peer through.

And then you feel something gentle and Slavic and soft standing beside you—it is Dora—and you hear your own voice saying, "I'll have some marinirte herring," and then the babel assumes component parts. It rises up and smites you in the ear.

You are at a table with Sam, the artist; he is drawing your picture on a plate, in India ink. It's indelible, too. There's an intellectual Chinaman; he is an anarchist; a Yiddish tailor (he is eating knishes) and the editor of a paper called "Freedom"—he expects it to be suppressed next issue. There is a fat man in a Prince Albert and checked trousers, and a pretty little thing from uptown.

"Tell me," said the pretty little thing, leaning across the table to the tailor, "do you believe in woman suffrage?"

"Before you answer that," said the Sirfessor, "let me expound a few of the laws of nature to you."

And the Sirfessor said: "Personality is the producer of progress, for where personality presides power resides. Next, exploitation is the first law of progress. Next, self-preservation is the first law of the ego, self-preservation is the second law of human nature. Now, what have you got to say, my man?"

The tailor scratched his head and answered, with some thought, "I belief in wimmen's suffering."

But you turn to the expounder of the laws of nature and ask him to expound himself and he tells you:

"I am a Sirfessor. A Sirfessor is a Knight of Knowledge among benighted bipeds, peddling pestiferous piffle. I'm an Englishman by birth and a human being by adoption. I don't support myself. I live by my wits. I'm the evangelist of the gospel according to Malfew Seklew, an English philosopher, called by the 'Lancashire Chronicle'—that's the people's paper—the laughing philosopher of Lancashire. He preaches the coming of the supercrat and the superman. There are seven stages; let me explain.

"The first stage is the SIMPOLEON. The Simpoleon is a mass of matter that doesn't matter—except when exploited.

"The second stage is the HOPEOLEON. The Hopeoleon is one who suffers from inflammation of the imagination.

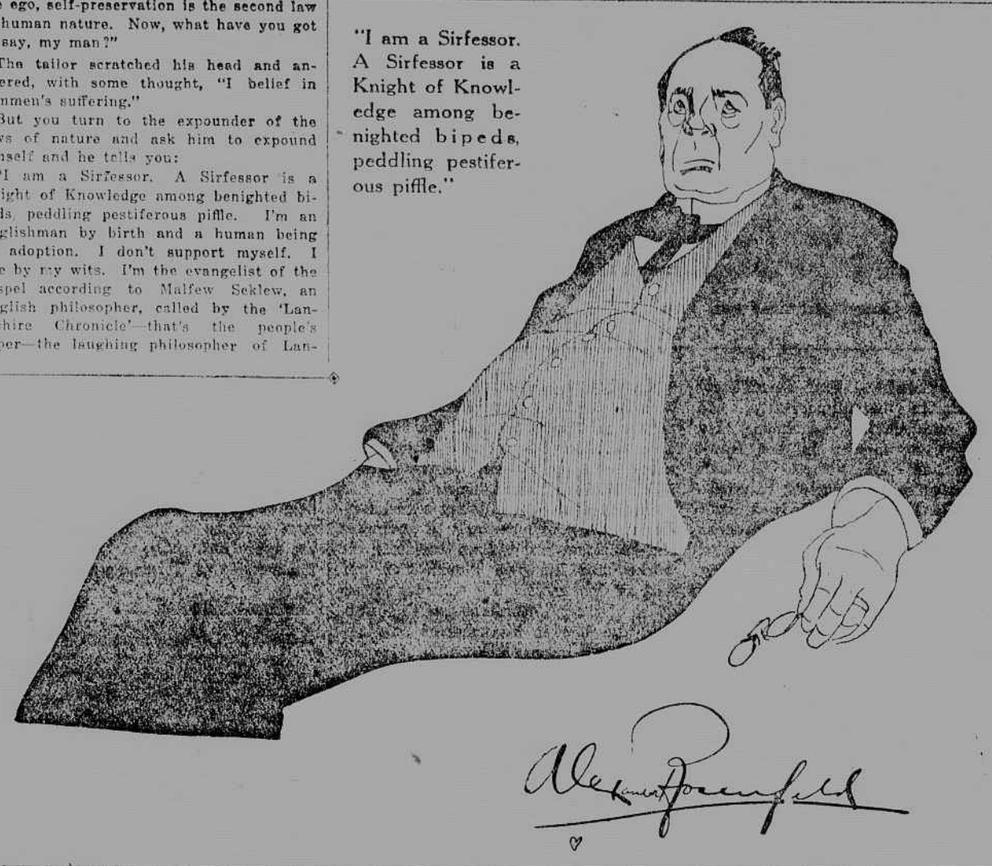
"The third stage is the DEMOLEON. The Demoleon is an ego on the half shell, and he suffers from perspiration of inspiration—a semi-developed, semi-sane and hemi-hatched organism, an underdone ego with hard-boiled beliefs and cross-eyed convictions.

"The fourth stage is the PSYCHOLEON. He stands on the threshold of thought, gazing into the eyeball of ecstasy and eternity, so to speak, without getting dizzy.

"The fifth stage is the EGOCRAT, one who has become a self-conscious egoist and recognizes that psychology precedes all progress and that enlightened egoism will make for the higher life.

"The sixth stage is the SUPERCRAT. He is first cousin to the superman-to-be. He is one who understands the seven wonders of the ego and the six hundred laws of nature. All supercrats seek danger because they seek new sensations. New sensations develop wisdom, and wisdom is the mother of wit and wickedness.

"The seventh and last stage is the SOCIAL ARISTOCRAT. The social aristocrat is one who has developed his social instinct until he is able to socialize his selfishness. The surplus value of his ego he gives away because it increases his happiness. In doing this the sum of happiness is increased



"I am a Sirfessor. A Sirfessor is a Knight of Knowledge among benighted bipeds, peddling pestiferous piffle."

"I should be ashamed to edit any sort of paper that wouldn't be suppressed."

in his environment, and the reign of revaluation has begun. Supermanity is here."

"Supervisor of vot?" the tailor wanted to know. "Guaranteed by vot system?"

"The system of logic," said the Sirfessor.

"For vy don't you make a calendar of it und sell it?" began the tailor.

The editor of "Freedom," the new magazine, spoke suddenly, from another table. "I should be ashamed to edit any sort of paper that wouldn't be suppressed," said he. "Read this!" and he handed a mussed journal to the Sirfessor, who read:

"'Freedom,' a revolutionary journal, dedicated to human freedom.

"GREETINGS

"'Freedom' enters upon the revolutionary field as the only English-speaking anarchist publication of the Western Hemisphere. For its appearance we offer no apology; we are oppressed, depressed and suppressed—yet we carry our colors majestically amid the turbulent conditions of Law and Order.

"For many years America has been void of a publication whose voice spoke revolution in every column. So it is to occupy this vacant space upon the intellectual rostrum that 'Freedom' doth appear.

"Its voice will shatter the foundation stones upon which human society now stands.

"It advocates Destruction!

"It advocates Construction!

"'Freedom's' mission is not to patch up a worn-out system along reform, or Socialist, lines, but to abolish all existing institutions.

"Revolution means Revolution—not reform!

"It is only when Gods, Governments, Hypocrisy, Tyranny and Slavery crumble away into oblivion that man will be able to assert himself. Man, know thyself! Assert your individuality! Demand—work—and fight for individual freedom.

"A. T."

"I vouldn't gif five cents for dot." This was the tailor's opinion.

"An anarchist," amended the Sirfessor, "is the meekest organism that ever dashed through space backward." A young lieutenant in the uniform of the Canadian Cavalry came in at this point and stood staring at the Sirfessor, who got up, and, supporting himself against the table in a lachrymose manner, continued: "Communism is the wild, weak wail of weaklings, cheaplings, meeklings and groundlings for succor, support and sympathy. Socialism is a moan in monotone for mercy and the millennium."

"Wow!" said the lieutenant.

"As I was saying," said the Sirfessor to the lieutenant, "wishes control the lives of cheap organisms; desire is intensified organisms. Will is the director of destiny and the creator of the future as expressed through the action of the will to power—man. The will to power is the elbow grease of evolution, and the engineer to progress. I am the president of the Society of Social Aristocrats. Have my card—

SOCIETY OF SOCIAL ARISTOCRATS
Admit One"

"Wow!" repeated the lieutenant.

And then, while some one in broken English is telling of the new religion of Abdul Baha, which has twelve basic principles—if you want to find out about it go to the

"Sure, I believe in wimmen's suffering."

temple just around the corner; they serve free lunch, too, and some one else is trying to sell you a red ticket to the I. W. W. ball on Saturday evening, January 25, at Park View Palace, on 110th Street, you suddenly realize that the nice little thing at your table is really a very nice little thing, and you start to tell her so, but along comes Esther and she says: "This is a restaurant, not a private room."

So you fumble around for your hat and slink out, and, as the door creaks behind you you feel the warm smell of cooking following you to the street and the voice of the Sirfessor saying: "I am the only one who knows anything about the Mentoid of Mirth, new science"——, and you are out in the clear night air.

The Bond Between: A Short Story by Reita Lambert Ranck

IT WAS one of those little blockhouse suburbs, so adequately covered in the real estate pamphlets: "within easy commuting distance of town, invigorating air, all modern conveniences, gorgeous view; why pay rent when you can own your own home"——

Little homesteads were beginning to pop up at regular intervals along the newly-guttered streets; scrubby fields resigned themselves to the rolling and hedging of enthusiastic investors, and the scattered cluster of neat, unimaginative little houses gradually took on some semblance of their owners' personality.

Allen Hardy's house, for example, spoke entirely of its master. In spite of its sounding-board walls and inadequate flooring, it had an air of rugged substantiality. Only the two tiny grass plots on either side of the front walk were conceded to the decorative scheme devised by the architect. The plot back of the house, neatly fenced in with white pickets, was wholly devoted to less beautiful but more nourishing products of the soil. With the exception of a narrow path which ran down the exact middle, like a neat part on a young girl's head, the garden was a flourishing mass of vegetables. Every possible variety was represented there by a small but select group of delegates.

It was here that Hardy was to be seen after the arrival of the 5:48 on weekdays, the 1:26 on Saturdays and all day Sundays, his large, somewhat stooping figure incased in overalls, his shaggy, graying head protected by a huge garden hat, weeding, hoeing and clipping with indefatigable patience.

At first he had had eyes only for those idolized rows of his between the two sides of picket fence, and then one day, stretching restfully after a long hour of lettuce-thinning, his eyes wandered inquisitively into his neighbor's garden on the left—his sole neighbor at present, although the building lot on his right had already felt the first pick on its knobby breast. He stood gazing a moment at that other garden—as lovingly cared for as his own, and a disdainful smile twitched his ragged mustache.

"Flowers—in war time, and not a vegetable!" was his comment, laden with limitless scorn.

And it was quite true. Beyond the fence was a sister plot of his own whose possibilities of usefulness had been smothered beneath a gaudy and exquisitely fragrant blanket. There were square beds of pansies and round beds of nasturtiums; there was a half-moon of forget-me-nots and a full moon of azaleas; there were narrow borders of sweetpeas, and already fecund Crimson Ramblers were climbing the surrounding fences and the tiny back porch. It was a fairy wish in that commonplace land of unbelief.

Allen Hardy grunted a little and was about to let himself down, by easy stages, into a sitting posture, when the keeper of the extravagant garden appeared, a watering-pot in her hand, a white apron embracing her little, stovepipe waist. She saw Hardy at once looming up there out of his vegetable patch and gave him a bright, neighborly nod before she commenced her round with the watering pot. Hardy solemnly returned the bow, noted that she was little and old and brisk and resumed his lettuce thinning.

But from that day forward the neighborly exchange of nods continued. Very probably it would have stopped right there had she not spoken first and thereby divulged her secret. It was on a warm August afternoon that Hardy, ready with his formal greeting, discovered her bearing down upon him, stepping carefully over and around her colorful handiwork. At sight of her coming toward him he swept off his shade hat and they achieved opposite sides of the fence simultaneously. Her crisp skirts were gathered cautiously in one hand, while in the other she held a curious, wiry object which she offered to Hardy.

"It's the mousetrap," she explained, "somehow it's gone wrong. I can't stand cats—never could—and they're just runnin' all over my cellar—the mice I mean. I thought maybe you wouldn't mind my askin' you"——

She was all of sixty, with thin, very white hair, drawn carefully away from a pink part in the very centre of her head. Her skin was the soft, apple blossom tint of an old lady whose womanhood was achieved before the back pages of the magazines were crowded with skin food and powder advertisements.

Hardy's keen glance beneath his shaggy brows thought her pale, blue eyes held a burden of ineffable sadness which differed oddly from her brisk step and cheerful manner. He took the trap, hanging his hat on a convenient picket.

"Mighty queer," he said politely, "how sometimes these things do go wrong. It's the spring, I guess."

"And it's a new one, too, almost," she affirmed. "Queer about those mice, ain't it—in a bran' new house?"

"Well," he mused, strong, red fingers busy with the trap, "it's a new neighborhood, you know. They're probably coming from that old dump over there by the railroad track."

She nodded brightly.

"Just what I thought! But the salesman told us—me and Georgie, my son—that they'd soon have it filled in over to that dump."

"Yes," he said, "they told my boy the same—before we'd bought."

They were silent for a moment while Hardy busied himself with the intricacies of the trap.

"You got a son, then?" he said absently. "Away, is he?"

There was a little pause.

"Oh, yes!" she said, and her voice was elaborately casual. "Why, we'd hardly got out here—we lived in the city—before Geordie, he went—to the war, you know."

Hardy raised his head and looked at her. The faded blue eyes were very bright and dry.

"Well-ll," he ejaculated slowly. "Now that's queer, isn't it? That's just the way it was with me and my boy, Hal. My boy's name is Harry. He felt he had to up and go when we'd no more than got settled."

The two faced each other for a still interval, and each penetrated the other's brave disguise. You, too! the searching eyes seemed to say; instead, the woman spoke, very proudly:

"Geordie didn't have to go—he was thirty-four, but he just felt like he couldn't help it. And so, after gettin' me fixed all comfortable, he said he guessed he'd try to enlist, and he did—fibbin' about his age, though. He passed everything fine."

"That's how it was with Hal. 'Dad,' he says to me, 'I don't care if I am over age—something's pushing me. I'm husky and nobody's depending on me; it isn't right not to go.' So he did. He didn't look more than twenty-eight. He's a fine mechanic, been working with me in the shop since he was eighteen."

"Geordie," she said, "is over there now."

"So is Hal. A letter came this mornin', censored and all, just like he said it would be."

"Well, well!" she said, and her wistful eyes sought his and smiled bravely.

"Well, well!" he repeated, unconscious of any banality. For a moment their eyes wandered sadly out over the sultry meadows, dotted with real estate signs, to distant horizons. Then hers came back and rested on her neighbor's garden.

"My!" she said with a sudden cheerfulness. "What a lovely garden! Those are young tomatoes, sure as I live! Now, how sensible to have vegetables."

"But not near so pretty as flowers," he said loyally. "They are beautiful flowers, no doubt of that. I never saw prettier."

She beamed back at him.

"I'll pick you a little bouquet. No—now don't refuse 'em; my nasturtiums need pickin'."

"I was just going to offer you some of these radishes," he said eagerly, "and in a day or so there'll be a good mess of peas—if you'd like them."

The radishes and nasturtiums changed hands, and each gift held the invaluable treasure of complete sympathy and understanding. Each knew the depth of the other's loneliness, and to each the proximity of a fellow sufferer was a boundless comfort.

After that the two gardeners, in the late afternoons, drifted inevitably toward the fence. Brief little bursts of confidence enlightened each about the other and Allen Hardy came to know that Agatha Mason, long a widow, had come, a little reluctantly, to the city when Geordie had been offered a partnership in a brisk grocery business. This venture, under the magic touch of Geordie, had thrived, the perusal of real estate pamphlets had ceased to be an idle pastime, and the small estate with "the gorgeous view" was finally theirs.

"Those stuffy city flats just didn't agree with me," she confided to her neighbor. "Geordie, he saw that, and it was his last word that he was glad to leave me situated here where I could have my flowers like I used to at home."

"Geordie" and "Hal," it developed, had much in common—quiet, retiring natures, admittedly plodding rather than brilliant Both had pondered long and laboriously before taking the final step toward khaki and the trenches, weighing the need of his single parent against that of his country, and succumbing finally to a conscientious conviction that the latter's was the greater.

Gradually, so magic was the bond between them, each grew to feel a friendly intimacy for the other's son. Quite unconsciously Mrs. Mason began to speak of Hardy's boy as "Hal" and Hardy's customary greeting for her was: "Evening; any news f— Geordie?"

"This," said Mrs. Mason, one late August evening, fluttering over to the fence, her hands full of various sized squares of cardboard, "this is Geordie at two. His curls were yellow then—though you can't tell in a picture."

"Well, well!" admiringly from Hardy.

"And here he is taken with me when he was five. He was so proud of that velvet suit. But, my, how he did hate his curls!"

"Yes, Hal didn't care much for his," chuckled Hardy. "We had to cut them off when he was six."

Mrs. Mason clicked her tongue against the roof of her mouth sympathetically.

"They're like that—boys are. And here's Geordie when he graduated from grammar school."

Always their talk was of their boys. Reminiscences popped up constantly and Hardy would have to postpone his potato spraying to relate that hackneyed tale of Hal's prowess when he licked the school "bully" at the tender age of eleven, or Mrs. Mason would stop in the act of weeding her pansies to tell of Geordie's diligence in achieving a soap order bicycle before he was twelve, and so on, ad infinitum.

Unconsciously their common sacrifice afforded both a healthy outlet for words too long pent up. As the summer passed, Hardy's lean, tired face, which had mirrored all the ravages of his sixty-three hard years, smoothed into its old kindly complacency, and Mrs. Mason's faded blue eyes brightened amazingly. As often as not now, her glasses would be propped carelessly up on her furrowed forehead as she went about her house and garden duties, a little song on her lips. They grew to watch with anxious care the coming of the postman, each harboring a secret fear for the safety of the other's lad: each rejoicing in the perusal of letters that brought good news.

The summer reached its zenith and began to wane. Hardy's garden fulfilled his fondest expectations and was harvested and divided with his next door neighbor. Mrs. Mason's pansies and sweetpeas were succeeded by autumny clusters of chrysanthemums and dahlias, and the friendship between the two, which was still a thing of snatched moments over the fence, grew into a strong and comforting tie.

And then one bronze fall day, Hardy, coming home from his shop and donning garden clothes as usual, waited patiently the length of time it takes to dig and sort three hills of potatoes for the appearance of Mrs. Mason. There was a newly arrived letter from Hal lying next to his heart and bursting to be made public. For Hal had been promoted and decorated, and, in the natural course of events, Mrs. Mason should have come fluttering toward him through her flower beds to share and rejoice in the good news.

At the fourth hill of potatoes Hardy began to worry. At the fifth he grew embarrassed at the thought of invading her little territory and making inquiries. But her absence was so unusual, the absolute quiet of that house next door so ominous, that when he did finally let himself through her front gate and approached the tiny back porch his self-consciousness was forgotten in his genuine concern.

He knocked softly on the back door, finding nothing incongruous in the thought that in all these weeks he had never thought to pay her a social call; had never before crossed his neighbor's carefully scrubbed threshold. After a second futile knock he tentatively turned the doorknob, and as it yielded to his touch entered cautiously.

The room was a twin kitchen to his own, but excruciatingly neat. Beyond, he knew, was a small square dining room and to the right of that a small, square parlor. That is where he found her, sitting on the edge of a chair with her head lying upon the golden oak centre table. She was so quiet that at first it frightened him, and then he saw a long envelope with a broken red seal—and he understood.

He went up to her very softly and laid a hand on her lean shoulder.

"There, there," he said, groping for words; "there, now, you mustn't take it so hard. It's just one more thing to be proud of."

She raised her head at last and her face was terrible in its dry-eyed immobility.

"There must be some mistake," she said harshly. "It says that Geordie—my Geordie"——

She reached for the envelope and thrust it weakly at him.

Hardy read the brief letter, feeling appallingly inarticulate, and then a typewritten phrase gave him inspiration.

"Why," he said eagerly, "why, Geordie was a hero. You couldn't have read it—they're going to send you his medal! The bravest man in his regiment!" Surely a little exaggeration at such a time could be excused. "Decorated for bravery and died a heroic death! Why, that's different, all right—who wouldn't die for that!"

He glanced sharply down at her, saw that her eyelids were twitching painfully and went on:

"Gosh!" he said, with eager admiration. "That's wonderful, all right! Your Geordie out of so many, while my Hal—he's got to be satisfied being just one of the ordinary ones."

That was his great sacrifice to her loss. That proud letter against his heart burned rebellious contradiction, but Hardy met the test loyally, and it worked as nothing else could have done. Geordie's mother thought she detected a little note of jealousy—yes, actual jealousy—in her friend's voice. The astonishing discovery brought her back to herself—threw a new light on her sorrow.

Her emotions, released from their bounds, began to shake her and sobs came, racking her body and cleansing her bitter heart—great, relieving sobs. And while she wept Hardy, his rough hand still on her shoulder, patted and soothed her.

"Can't you just see him, that brave! Giving up his life deliberately for us—going straight to a hero's reward with every other mother's son of them longing to have the same chance? He knew you'd be proud and glad!"

Gradually the sobs were subsiding.

"Why," he went on, elaborately, "can't you just see him—with every officer envying his record—and the medal?"

There was a long silence, broken only by her soft weeping.

"But now I'm—I'm all—alone"——

So softly did the words come that had he not been very close he would not have heard them.

"Not a bit of it," he protested belligerently, "alone nothing! That medal—we'll hang it in the parlor, shall we? I got a boy and you've got a medal—and a hero. The two houses won't be necessary any more. There's no need of you staying alone here—and I need you, Hal and me, and maybe my Hal, too—who knows"——

He was kneeling clumsily beside her, and at last she raised a tear-swollen face and put out a shaking hand—not in supplication, but in comfort.

To an unimaginative onlooker the picture they made might have seemed almost ludicrous. These two, battered and lined by more than threescore years of life, products of the unpicturesque middle class, of physical labor and self-denial, finding again the treasure of unselfish love. . . .

"We'll take down that picket fence," she mused softly, her hand upon his rough sleeve, "then you can grow twice as many vegetables"——

"Flowers!" he interrupted quickly.

"Vegetables," she repeated with finality. "I've wasted enough on flowers, and we'll hang it—the medal—in your parlor, Allen."

"Our parlor, Agatha," he corrected, softly.